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ABSTRACT

This booklet was written for central-office administrators, board members, parents, teachers, and others who seek outstanding principals. It was also written for principals who want to improve their skills so they may serve their constituents, especially students, at the highest level. The booklet is the third installment in a trilogy of educational propositions developed to ensure excellence in education. Twenty-two principals, who are charter members of the National Association for Schools of Excellence (NASE), provided the success stories used in this publication. It lists the 10 essential elements for achieving success, such as high expectations, clear vision, and leadership, and outlines how partnerships with businesses can benefit both partners. The text advocates identifying and selecting the best people for teaching positions and describes how the role of the principal has changed from that of manager to leader. The document lists the eight key points of action for reaching international standards, including proper school structure, effective assessment, and parent involvement. It discusses the importance of a principal's personal qualities and convictions, such as a profound belief in the limitless possibilities of human potential. A question-and-answer section is followed by three appendices that include a position statement for NASE. (RJM)

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April
1999

Leading America's Schools

The Critical Role of the Principal

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Acknowledgments

The 22 principals who are charter members of the National Association for Schools of Excellence (NASE)—whose success stories tell of leadership and team effort resulting in increased student achievement—are the sources of the information and insights presented in this publication, as well as two previous ones, *Partners for Success: Business and Education* and *Saving America's Children*, under the leadership of Ron Herndon, NASE Chairperson. Three meetings of this group have been conducted in Oregon with the assistance of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Associated Oregon Industries Foundation, leading Oregon politicians, and the state's business community.

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Leading America's Schools:
The Critical Role of the Principal

This work was developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) and the National Association for Schools of Excellence (NASE), an organization of nationally recognized school administrators who have, through their own accomplishments, dispelled the myth that poor and minority students cannot succeed. These administrators have tackled the essential job of outlining the qualities and attributes that are necessary for the most important leader in education, the building principal.

April 1999

NASE–National Association for Schools of Excellence
and
NWREL–Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

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Executive Summary

Finding, Developing, and Retaining Outstanding Principals

The importance of quality leadership in any organization cannot be overemphasized. Poorly led organizations fail. For businesses, military organizations and teams of any kind, this is a fundamental truth. Leadership in schools is no less important. It is widely acknowledged that the quality of the principal has a profound impact on the quality of the school and the education of the children it serves.

As we stand on the edge of the 21st century, America is at an important crossroads. Much more will be required of our children educationally than the generations that preceded them. In an increasingly interdependent, technological world, the quality of our children's lives, the vitality of the democratic culture they inherit, and their ability to make a contribution to the generations that follow are all directly dependent upon the quality of the education they receive. Moreover, it will no longer be sufficient for some to become well educated while many others, particularly low income and minority populations, do not. For our culture to flourish in an atmosphere of opportunity, all children will have to reach more of their human potential. Failure by our generation to accomplish this goal holds negative economic, moral, and civic implications for our children and theirs.

This work was written with the understanding that for students to receive the best education possible, outstanding building-level leadership is essential. It was also written at a time when the quantity of those aspiring to become principals is significantly decreasing. Due to the dual conditions of the importance of the principal's role and the increasing scarcity of candidates aspiring to that role, finding, developing, and retaining outstanding principals has become a highstakes imperative.

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For students to receive the best education possible, outstanding building-level leadership is essential.

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This document was written for those central office administrators, board members, parents, teachers and others who seek to find, develop, and retain outstanding principals for their schools. It was also written for principals who want to improve their skills so they may serve their constituents, especially students, at the highest levels.

While principals have different skills and styles, outstanding principals share similar qualities. Specific suggestions about personal qualities and convictions, as well as specific skills that should be sought in ideal principal candidates, are provided in the pages that follow. Specific skills that might be taught to principals who do not already possess them are also identified. Thoughts about where to seek promising principal candidates are cited, and numerous recommendations are made about how to nurture principals so they may achieve their full potential. Most importantly, suggestions for retaining outstanding principals are clearly delineated. To provide additional insight into the ways that outstanding principals consider and address key issues, responses by nationally recognized principals to 12 questions that consider how to ensure school success are also related.

Background

All American Children Deserve Leaders Who Can Assure Excellence Based on International Educational Standards

Since early 1989, the National Association for Schools of Excellence (NASE) has been identifying and disseminating effective school practices throughout the country. *Leading America's Schools* is the third installment in a trilogy of educational propositions developed to ensure that education in America is second to no other country in the world. The tenets put forth in the document are based upon nationally recognized and proven programs of excellence developed by practitioners in the field who refuse to accept failure for any child in the United States.

Leading America's Schools builds on this foundation. The assertions in this document are a natural evolution of ideas created during the last 10 years of educational revolution that has transpired in our country. With all evolutions, strategies and plans change, but the primary reason to resist the oppressive status quo remains the same. NASE members continue to strive for excellence for all children. It is unacceptable to allow any of our children to fall, and certainly not because educators and others cling to the security of failed programs of yesterday.

As we proceed into the Information Age, a significantly higher portion of our population than ever before must be well educated. We can no longer afford to permit schools to be sifting and sorting mechanisms where only some students succeed. If we are to compete in the global economy, we can no longer allow a significant portion of our population to be poorly educated. Given recent brain research, it is even questionable that those students who are considered successful achieve anywhere close to their full potential. In short, if schools do not educate all of our children more successfully, our transition into the future will be marked by a workforce unable to compete in a global economy, a divided and endangered democracy, and untold loss of human potential.

We can no longer afford to permit schools to be sifting and sorting mechanisms where only some students succeed.

Partners for Success: Business and Education

Almost eight years ago, *Partners For Success: Business and Education*, a joint publication of NASE, Associated Oregon Industries, and the Tom Peters Group, dispelled the myth that poor and minority students could not learn. Twenty-two nationally recognized school principals identified 10 essential elements for achieving success and developed a two-year plan (see Appendix I) for revitalizing a failing school. This information was distributed nationwide for others to emulate.

The NASE partners recognized that the "bottom line" for evaluating all building principals and the effectiveness of a school is measured by what students have attained academically, including achievement gains in basic skills, technological applications, problem-solving ability, attendance, behavior and much more. Practitioners from across the nation replicated the successful techniques reported in *Partner for Success*. These techniques, based on a passionate desire by individuals to guarantee that all children would learn, exposed the tired excuses of the past, which hold no relevance for educators who refuse to write off even the smallest percentage of today's youth. All children can learn. Period. It is our duty to make sure that new and practicing building administrators adhere to this credo.

Ten Essential Elements for Achieving Success

In 1989 outstanding school principals—all validated practitioners—published 10 essential elements to identify what was necessary to bring a school to national standards and what was expected from the building principal to achieve this goal. Following are these essential elements:

1. High Expectations. High expectations for students and staff was unanimously identified as the most critical element in achieving academic excellence and equity. We must firmly believe that all children can learn. The principal's primary responsibility is to ensure that teachers, parents, students, and other school staff believe that all children can learn.

2. Clear Vision. The principal must clearly articulate the vision of where the school is going and how to get there. This vision drives all program decisions. The school must have a mission statement that clearly defines and articulates goals. "Yes" and "no" decisions regarding curriculum, programs, expenditures, schedules, and all operations must be based on whether they support the school's mission, and it is the principal's responsibility to see that this is so.

3. Leadership. The principal is the instructional and managerial leader of the school and must provide strong leadership if the school is to achieve academic excellence. The principal must be versed in state-of-the-art methodology and pedagogy, and constantly demonstrate the highest level of commitment, performance, and expectations through actions not rhetoric.

4. Teamwork. Teamwork is essential. The principal is the leader, but to turn the vision into reality requires the coordinated effort of everyone involved in the school. Principals, their staff, parents, and communities must function as a team to formulate and implement policy. Each group should have a meaningful role in achieving the school's goals. It is the principal who guarantees that this will happen.

5. Staff Development. Successful schools provide an ongoing, strong staff development program. They hold to the philosophy that no matter how good you are, you can always be better. All building personnel must receive regular, comprehensive, and appropriate development based on continuing needs. This does not necessarily mean that everyone can be generically trained. Specific goals based on the mission of the school should be considered any time staff development occurs. It is not unheard of to train different staff in different areas. Empowerment of the qualified is necessary. Elimination of those that cannot or will not become qualified is required through mandated training, counseling, or if necessary, firing.

Respect for others enhances academic performance and improves the learning environment. Therefore, human values must be fully integrated into every segment of training that affects curriculum. When the principal demonstrates through his or her actions that this is essential, then the staff will follow. Students must learn to accept responsibility for their actions, work as members of a team, show respect for others, and offer something back to others. No less should be expected of the adults around them.

6. Strong, Appropriate Curriculum. A comprehensive, appropriate, and flexible curriculum must exist in every school to meet the unique needs of students it serves. Children attend school to learn, and curriculum elements are the stepping stones to continuous academic achievement. The principal should be a leader in curriculum development by recognizing the experts and resources that are available, not only on the staff but outside the school as well, and garnering those resources for the benefit of the children in the building.

7. Safe, Clean, and Orderly Environment for Learning. Learning is most effective when it occurs in a safe, clean, and orderly environment. School and classroom management plans are required if everyone is to understand the expectations of the school and community. Teachers and all staff must be trained in proven methods of effective behavior management, with the principal leading the effort. Finally, every school should have adequate and appropriate materials, equipment, and supplies.

8. Genuine Accountability. Genuine accountability must exist for the performance and progress of staff and students. Everyone is accountable for achieving academic excellence; accountability must be present at every level. All programs and strategies must be measured regularly to make certain positive progress is being made toward the school's goals.

And there is an "or else": Despite comprehensive efforts to assist personnel to improve, those who are either incapable or unwilling to change and whose continued presence will harm students must be removed. If the principal does not do it, another person should be found to accomplish the task.

9. Recognition and Rewards for Excellence. Excellence in education deserves regular recognition and rewards. Programs should be instituted that reward students, parents, and staff for academic success.

10. Strong Community and Parental Support. Schools benefit greatly from a strong sense of community pride and support. Principals should make every effort to encourage meaningful involvement of families and the community in the school's operation. All members of the school staff, especially the principal, must continuously seek the involvement of parents and the community.

Saving America's Children

Immediately following the publication of *Partners for Success* in 1989, NASE educators and business leaders recognized that what they had developed was not enough. If our children were to have any chance in today's world, they would need the skills necessary to meet and exceed international educational standards. Five years ago, these same partners, along with five international experts and outstanding school leaders identified in the state of Oregon, outlined what was required in America's schools for our children to achieve international parity and eventually exceed existing world standards in education. Specific methods and standards schools could immediately apply to obtain increased levels of achievement for our school children were identified during an international symposium sponsored by NASE and Associated Oregon Industries. These methods were published in *Saving America's Children: Achieving International Standards in American Schools: A Blueprint for Change.*

Saving America's Children outlined eight key points and numerous specific standards that educators could apply immediately to obtain more effective levels of achievement for our children. Another two-year implementation plan was included. These eight points were considered at the time to be the first real identification of international standards for American schools and school leaders to strive toward. Until this point, the NASE principals understood that when gauged against international standards, the original work in *Partners* could be described as a discussion of minimum competencies for principals. Unfortunately, many still think that the minimum standards are far too difficult to attain and view them as benchmarks for excellence. This is not correct. The principalship is not an easy position or one that can be defined in simple terms. The position requires much more if excellence in a specific school is to be attained.

NASE partners contend that the internationally identified eight key points of actions must be implemented if principals hope to move their individual buildings toward international parity and excellence.

Update

NASE members expanded upon the tenets presented eight years ago with the following additions:

■ *Identify and select the very best people for teaching positions*
The principal must master the hiring process which includes recruiting, interviewing and making final selections.

■ *Base leadership upon moral initiative*
The principal and all staff members must be unified in doing what is right for children, leaders leading leaders.

■ *Challenge assumptions*
The principal must challenge historical assumptions such as how the school day is organized and how time, space, and resources are used.

■ *Communicate effectively*
A principal must use traditional means of communication effectively as well as emerging forms of communication such as e-mail, Web pages and the Internet.

■ *Access knowledge efficiently*
Information is essential to providing the best education to students. Technological advances require principals to become adept at leading all toward the efficient accessing of knowledge in today's information age.

■ *Base curriculum on the best standards*
The principal must be aware of and take part in basing curriculum on best standards as they evolve in the national and international search for high quality curriculum.

■ *Be data driven*
The principal must lead in making reasonable decisions based upon data in the areas organization, supervision and evaluation.

It Is Time to Act

A systematic review of American education has been completed by the NASE partners over an eight year time period. The information gleaned from these experts resulted in not only identifying what was needed in American schools, but also the development of specifically proven strategies that, when implemented, can move any American school into the international arena of excellence. But so far the successes have been few and far between. The criteria and concepts of what makes an effective school have been developed, but do we have the leadership to deliver to the American public?

While everyone supports the idea that education is a team effort, it is imperative that the team be led by a strong and dedicated leader. No one person can have more of an impact on the school, the staff and the students than the building principal. No one is in a better position to effect more changes for good through personal example and inspiration. But, a major dilemma has occurred in that now that strong leadership is needed more then ever in America's schools, fewer and fewer qualified individuals are coming forward to accept the challenge.

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The role of the principal is increasing in complexity because it has changed from that of manager to leader.

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Districts now face significant difficulty finding quality principals. This is at a time when the role of the principal is increasing in complexity because it has changed from that of manager to leader. Schools must become institutions in which students develop into productive citizens. It is essential to identify individuals who have potential to become outstanding principals. Principals must be developed to their full potential and principals who truly excel must be nurtured and retained so they will remain in the profession.

The NASE partners recognize that it is imperative to focus on the principal as the one person in the best position to lead a school to excellence. NASE principals accept the tenet that recreating the schools of our youth will not adequately prepare our children for the new basic skills and technical and professional knowledge required in modern society. They believe that the principal must be the accountable champion in every school building in America because in the final analysis, no excuse for failure is acceptable for our students. Success is the only option.

Eight Key Points of Action for Reaching International Standards

Each of the eight points addresses a specific component of an overall plan for helping America's schools reach international educational standards. Today's principals must have the skills, or the ability to learn the skills, necessary to accomplish the task of preparing our children for the global workplace.

1. Business and School Partnerships. For our students to be competitive today and in the future, businesses must develop partnerships with schools. Accountability and planning are vital. First, business involvement in schools must be contingent upon schools having a strategic plan for children to quickly reach national and international academic standards. Building principals who are not trained in formulate strategic plans put their building at risk by not receiving the aid and support that businesses can offer. A building principal must initiate contact with businesses that will assist in moving children and staff toward the attainment of internation-al standards. Effective principals will insist that business and industry take an active role in defining what competency levels are necessary for specific technical and professional occupations that will impact children when they enter the world of work. Sharing this information with students, teachers and staff builds a solid foundation for the development of goals and strategies. A natural extension of this cooperation is business and schools joining in partnerships to provide work experience for students and internships for teachers.

Business people serving on school advisory councils, effective principals, school improvement teams and board-level committees must provide needed direction for schools. This collaboration should encourage businesses to provide resources for teaching basic, entry-level workforce skills, along with awards and incentives to effective schools. Businesses and schools entering into technological information sharing services are again a natural extension of effective administration at the building level. Businesses and principals need to create transferable high school academic credit for on-the-job work experience. This necessitates businesses and schools establishing programs that show students a direct relationship between school performance and work performance.

2. School Structure. Schools must be structured in a way that permits teachers to teach appropriate curricula. As the building leader, it is the principal's responsibility to heighten the awareness of the total school community. For instance, it has been widely known for many years that the length of the school year must be increased to match that of other industrial countries. The length of the school day also should be expanded.

An effective principal who uses the mission of the school and the power and influence of parents, the community, and business can do much to make these requirements a reality. Alternative pathways to high school graduation are needed. Encompassing professional and technical education with built-in flexibility between pathways will enable individuals to move easily between academic, technical, and professional education.

An effective principal will support and champion specific professional and technical training to prepare students for a high-tech world. Conversely, technical training cannot take place unless principals insist on primary school programs that allow children to progress at their own developmental pace, such as the nongraded kindergarten through third grade concept.

Schools should provide assistance to students and families, and life experiences should be considered for high school academic credit. Individuals with unique training outside of conventional education should be given the opportunity to teach. Educators must be able to make curricular decisions on a site-by-site basis and be held accountable for these changes. The person who is most accountable is the building principal.

3. Curriculum Requirements. As the educational leader of the building, the principal must spearhead efforts toward implementing an integrated curriculum that includes these basic skills: keyboarding, data manipulation, problem solving and decision making, systems of technology, resource management, economics of work, human relations, applied math and science, and career planning. Reading, writing, listening, and speaking remain the primary focus in all content areas. Math areas that should be stressed include basic operations, logic, statistics, probability, and measurement. Applied mathematics should be taught using various operations since algebra and geometry taught in isolation appear to be seldom used in the work force and everyday life.

Applied science also should be taught within an integrated curriculum that stresses higher-order thinking skills such as problem solving, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Of course, these skills should be emphasized at all levels and in all areas of instruction.

Student work experience and apprenticeships with business and civic authorities should be required, and the majority of instruction should focus on application and problem-solving skills. Since the majority of instruction should engage students in actively using information, rather than passively receiving information, students need to be taught and assessed by working together to solve problems and create solutions, much like adults do in the workplace. The availability of computers and emerging technologies must increase in classrooms, particularly at the middle school and high school levels, but also at the elementary level. Curriculum for primary children must be appropriate and reflect the fact that young children learn best through active involvement and play.

At all grade levels basic skills should include the ability to use information systems, demonstrate personal and civic responsibility, model acceptable personal behaviors and skills, set priorities, work as a member of a team, reason and use appropriate interpersonal skills. No textbook should be required as the sole source for meeting

class requirements. Principals must provide different training to selected empowered individuals.

Critical analysis and evaluation should be taught as prerequisites for entry-level work, further education and everyday life. All schools will have to adopt distance-learning technologies. Using cable systems and satellites, a teacher with specific skills can instruct students who are hundreds of miles away. Many rural schools currently do this, making classes in specialized areas such as physics, foreign languages, and other professional and technical skills available to students everywhere. Principals who are technologically illiterate will do little to enhance the learning in their buildings.

4. Effective Assessment. Students must be assessed on a regular, ongoing basis, but curricula should drive assessment, not the other way around. Assessment should include a wide variety of techniques such as anecdotal information (portfolios), assigned class work, oral questioning, quizzes, senior projects, tests and standardized measures. When letter grades and standardized achievement tests are used in isolation their validity is questionable. Using these methods to assess student performance during the first four years of schooling is especially questionable.

International standards require that teachers and especially administrators be assessed by how well their students learn and perform. Education at all levels must be judged by how well it prepares students for the future. It is unfair to blame students and their families for the failures of American education.

5. Parent Involvement. Parents are the first and most important teachers their children have. Parents must play an active role in the education of their children or they will greatly limit their future. Many parents may be put off by the word "involvement," so it is necessary to stress the difference between involvement and support. Involvement may mean helping in the classroom or providing needed supplies for children. But support is infinitely more necessary and includes monitoring homework, setting goals with the teacher and accepting the same accountability for a child's learning as the teacher and principal. When this occurs, parents value school and school achievement, and they encourage their children to do the same.

A principal must demand that parents drastically limit the amount of television their children watch. Research concludes that children who watch more than 10 hours of television a week have lower school achievement, are less creative, and have smaller vocabularies. Parents should listen to their primary-age children read. Parents should never be afraid or embarrassed if they do not understand how their child's homework should be completed. It is the teacher's and principal's responsibility that students understand an assignment before they leave class for home.

Schools should establish regular private consultation with parents to discuss their child's progress, as well as techniques for incorporating supplementary home instruction. Some traditional parent involvement strategies must be continued such as parent organizations, open houses, parent teacher conferencing on a quarterly basis, and volunteer programs. In addition, parents should be members of school policy and oversight organizations.

By expanding curriculum to include parenting classes for parents and high school students, principals can make an investment now in future parent support.

6. Student Self-Esteem. Healthy, productive citizens require positive and realistic self-esteem. Student self-esteem is enhanced by successful learning coupled with appropriate rewards. Self-esteem is built upon successfully achieving high individual standards, and schools must develop recognition programs that reward student achievement and effort. Teachers must help students build self-esteem by sincerely caring for them and guiding them toward genuine success on a daily basis. Principals set that tone in a school through their actions and deeds. When students demonstrate success in international academic competition, celebrate their achievement.

7. Teacher Training. The evidence and recommendations for effective teacher training have been outlined in educational research for the past several years. International educational institutions have followed the recommendations while American schools have ignored the issue. The following elements for teacher training should be supported by all principals today because they are essential for providing teacher trainees with the skills they need to become successful teachers.

- European schools require teacher trainees to receive on-site experiences in the working world. Principals should require that teacher trainees be taught by practicing master teachers. Teacher trainees must receive formal training in classroom management and be trained using international standards and strategies.
- Teacher trainees should successfully intern for one year with an experienced master teacher before being certified. Outstanding retired master teachers can work with school districts as trainers and mentors.
- Each school and district must provide a strong staff training program based on locally assessed needs, and successful teachers should conduct most of the teacher training. Teaching leadership trainers at every school should be recognized at each school, rewarded and compensated. Practicing teachers should be released and given paid sabbaticals for renewal training, and all staff supervision should be conducted by master teachers.

8. Foreign Languages. A second language for all students is essential in an interdependent world. As a leader in curriculum development, the principal needs to strive to include a designated second language that is incorporated into all curricular areas, beginning in the primary years and continuing through high school graduation. Additional languages must be offered at the middle and high school levels. A measure of accountability should be that by sixth grade, students should be able to listen, write, speak, and read in a second language.

Outstanding Principals: Identifying, Developing, and Retaining the Very Best

Identifying Outstanding Principals

The first step in identifying those who have the ability to be outstanding principals is having a clear concept of the qualities and skills needed to do the job well. It is true that outstanding principals have professional skills and personal attributes that are disparate. It is also true that individual "fit" to any local situation is critical for a prospective principal to be successful. Despite these caveats, there are important personal qualities, convictions, and professional skills that outstanding principals share. Individuals who are looking for outstanding principals should identify individuals who possess as many of these as possible. NASE principals recommend that candidate screening devices, interview questions, and reference inquiries be designed to reveal the extent to which individual candidates possess or have the capacity to develop the personal qualities and professional skills that follow.

Personal Qualities and Convictions

NASE principals believe that personal qualities and convictions are more important to look for in a prospective candidate for principal than professional skills. The former comprise an individual's character and the views he or she brings to the professional setting; as such, they are not likely to be altered significantly through additional training or mentoring designed to improve professional competence.

The NASE principals suggest that individuals responsible for hiring principals look for candidates who possess the following personal qualities and convictions which outstanding principals share.

Moral Commitment to Serving the Best Interest of Children. Outstanding principals view the work of educators as singularly devoted to serving the best interest of children. Consequently, outstanding principals use as a template for their decisions the following question: Does it serve the best interest of students?

Those looking for candidates who have the potential to become outstanding principals are well advised to look for individuals with a history of focusing their efforts on student achievement.

Profound Belief in the Limitless Possibilities of Human Potential. Outstanding principals hold the conviction that all children can learn. The NASE principals believe that this is the most important conviction a candidate may possess. Outstanding principals are absolutely passionate about the importance of educating all children well. They are passionate because they believe the consequences of a poor education are extraordinarily destructive for individuals and our society. They understand that even the best students can learn more if appropriately challenged.

Outstanding principals believe that to unleash the human potential of children, they must work to unleash the human potential of their teachers. To many outstanding principals, helping teachers grow is the most rewarding aspect of their work. Additionally, outstanding principals are insatiable in their own efforts to grow; they constantly seek personal and professional development; it excites and stimulates them.

Those seeking candidates who have potential to become outstanding principals must seek individuals who demonstrate a passionate belief in the limitless possibilities that humans possess. These individuals must also believe that it is the principal's responsibility to create the climate and motivation for growth to occur.

High Moral Character and Commitment to Ethical Behavior. Outstanding principals understand that individuals follow and synergize with them not because of their position, but because of who they are as a person and professional. They understand that the most powerful tool they possess is influence and that influence is based upon the credibility they have developed through their actions. Outstanding principals understand that it is the leaders who lead by example that will be followed: they do what they say; they are what they project; they treat others with dignity courtesy and respect; they are persistent in their efforts to help teachers and students grow. Consequently, outstanding principals model behaviors they expect in others.

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Those looking for individuals who have the capacity to excel in the principalship must seek individuals with a record of high moral integrity, individuals who model behaviors that demonstrate their commitment to providing the highest quality of education.

Commitment to Working Interdependently. Outstanding principals realize that no one individual possesses sufficient knowledge or skills to bring a school to the highest levels of performance. They realize that the synergy achievable through interdependent, collaborative effort is the hallmark of a high performance team. Outstanding principals seek to develop a high performance team. Included on this team, but in different ways, are all school constituents, especially students, their parents and their teachers. Those seeking outstanding principals must identify individuals who are committed to working interdependently with their constituencies.

Commitment to Treating Different People Differently. Outstanding principals seek to promote growth in individual students and staff members based upon what works best for the individuals involved. They understand that brain research and research into individual thinking and learning styles suggest that there is no one best way to educate all students. Consequently, outstanding principals promote a variety of instructional practices and other learning opportunities demonstrated by research to be effective. They also are flexible about educational delivery models and seek ways to provide options for students and teachers.

Outstanding principals also realize that different staff members bring to the table different skills, abilities, and personal orientations. Outstanding principals are relentless in their effort to help each staff member realize their full potential, but are cognizant that this means different mentoring, training opportunities, and supervision for each. They realize that while the overwhelming majority of teachers will respond positively to good leadership, there are some who, for various reasons, do not serve children well. Outstanding principals address issues of teacher deficiency with integrity; they do not permit their students to be served poorly.

Those looking for outstanding principals should seek educators who understand the importance and necessity of treating different people differently.

High Degree of Intelligence and Personal Flexibility. Leadership is not an easy job. While NASE principals do not view intelligence as a sufficient condition for an individual to be an outstanding principal, they view it as a necessary one.

Outstanding principals also demonstrate great personal flexibility. Their flexibility, however, is with respect to the means by which they achieve their primary end—student achievement—not with respect to the end itself. Additionally, while outstanding principals are flexible with respect to means, they are not flexible with respect operating ethically.

Those seeking outstanding principals are well advised to seek individuals of intelligence and personal flexibility.

Professional Skills and Knowledge

A candidate's professional skill level is very different from the personal qualities and convictions he or she possesses. Professional skills may be improved with appropriate experience and training; personal qualities and convictions are not so readily altered. Thus, NASE principals suggest that while it is important to seek candidates for the principalship who hold the skills suggested in this section, the greater question for those doing the selecting is whether they believe that a prospective candidate has sufficient potential to develop competency in those skills not already possessed. The philosophical issue in question here is this: Is potential more important than experience? NASE principals suggest that the answer to this question is, "yes!"

NASE principals believe the following skills are possessed by outstanding principals.

Skills of Working Interdependently. NASE principals understand the complexity of the modern principalship. The days of principals spending their time with purely managerial functions have passed. Principals are now required to provide real educational leadership in addition to their other responsibilities if all students are to perform at significantly higher levels. Additionally, it is paramount that students, their parents, staff members, and community all be a part of defining and delivering education if each student is to be successful. Given the demands of the position and the need for involvement in the educational process by disparate parties, NASE members suggest that principals must be highly skilled in working with others. Principals must be skilled in team building, helping groups identify common interests, and facilitating groups so they may arrive at consensus. Principals must be skilled in involving parents in the educational process, working with teachers, students

and others individually and in groups. Only through the synergy of collaboration will the culture of the school change so that students can achieve their full potential.

Individuals seeking outstanding principals must assess a candidate's skills, or ability to develop the skills, of working with others interdependently.

Communication Skills, including Technological Fluency. Communication skills are mandatory for leaders to work interdependently with groups. NASE members suggest that principals must be able to communicate at highly proficient levels verbally and in writing. Moreover, principals must be fluent in new technologies, such as the Internet, if they are to provide their staff and others with appropriate information. Technological fluency is also important for another reason: If principals want their staffs to become proficient in the latest technology, they must model that behavior themselves.

Those seeking outstanding principals should assess a candidate's communication skills. In doing so, they must determine the candidates technological proficiency. This is a must!

Vision of What Schools Can and Must Become

Those assessing candidates for principalships must assess a candidate's vision for his or her school. That vision should include some basic idea of what experts suggest students will have to know and be able to do to be successful in the 21st Century. It should also include the idea that school is about educating students for citizenship and personal development. The candidate's vision should also include knowledge of best educational practices which have some hope of providing students with the skills and knowledge they need. While it is possible to provide candidates with much of this knowledge after they have been given a principalship, the best candidates will demonstrate that they have already formulated a vision of some quality.

Management Skills. It is axiomatic that those who cannot manage a school cannot lead it. From this perspective, management skills are an absolutely necessary condition, though not at all a sufficient one, for a principal to become outstanding. NASE principals have identified six managerial areas in which principals need to become skilled: (1) budgeting, (2) scheduling, (3) student management/discipline, (4) staff supervision, (5) facilities, and (6) hiring process.

Those looking for outstanding principals must assess a candidates knowledge and abilities to manage the school in these areas. These are skills that can be learned, if a candidate is so predisposed.

Knowledgeable and Skilled in Staff Development. To bring a staff to the highest levels of proficiency, principals must be cognizant of the best training available. They must be innovative in providing the right training to the right individuals. For example, teachers who are more skilled might develop unique proficiency that they, in turn, may teach to their colleagues. Less skilled teachers may need more remedial approaches.

Those seeking outstanding principals should assess a candidates understanding of the importance of developing staff members so they, in turn, promote growth in others. Best candidates will be passionate about empowering the right people. They actively nurture those ready to grow by providing them with opportunities to develop. Those who have experienced helping others to truly unleash more of their human potential will emerge through their passion and excitement because it is the true essence of teaching and being a teacher.

Knowledgeable and Skilled in Assessing All Areas of School Performance. The primary focus of outstanding principals is student achievement. They find ways to focus on this with the collective efforts of everyone in their building. NASE principals hold the view that outstanding principals must be skilled in assessing all areas of school performance to ensure student achievement is maximized. Schools will not improve unless those who run them hold themselves and others accountable. Without appropriate use of classroom, school, and districtwide assessment, students will not know what they have learned and what they need to learn. Likewise, without appropriate assessment, teachers will not know what they have taught well and what they need to teach. Other indicators of success such as attendance, incidence of student discipline, graduation rates, etc. are also important in determining schoolwide success.

Candidates for principal should demonstrate awareness of the importance of assessment. Best candidates will be able to be specific about best ways to assess students, teachers, and the performance of a school.

Organizational Skills. NASE principals believe a poorly organized leader cannot lead well. Organizational skills help principals do the right things at the right times. Those seeking outstanding principals should look for evidence that a candidate is well organized or has the ability to become so.

Identifying Quality Principals

When a principal vacancy occurs, the search for a principal often proceeds in the following manner: The position is posted locally, regionally and/or nationally. It is generally expected that a sufficient number of quality candidates will simply emerge. While this model may have been sufficient to find candidates, it is growing less so. The grow-

ing dearth of qualified candidates and the questionable reliability of the traditional means of developing candidate pools make it imperative that alternative means be considered for identifying qualified candidates. Two recommended alternatives follow:

Developing Talent from Within. Districts most frequently fail to recognize and nurture the talent they already possess. In this era of administrator shortages, districts are well advised to reconsider this myopic and foolish practice. Perhaps the best place to look for talent within the district is among the teachers who demonstrate many of the personal qualities and convictions shared by outstanding principals. These are teachers who are respected by administrators and colleagues alike because of their excellence as a teacher. They hold the respect of their colleagues on matters pertaining to best educational practices. Quite often these individuals are ones who have elected on their own to take unique training, then, in turn have elected to teach their new found skills to their colleagues. These are individuals who care deeply for students and have, over time, demonstrated that through their teaching, seven-to-ten years should be considered minimum as a rule-of-thumb.

Districts are well advised to consciously develop and institutionalize a systematic plan to identify and nurture potentially strong internal candidates. All administrators in contact with these talented individuals have the responsibility to visit with them about their potential. Many may not be interested in administration, but some will be. Districts need to provide opportunities for these individuals to explore and develop their talents through job shadowing, internships, or brief orientations about the beauties and difficulties of being a principal. For those who appear to be outstanding candidates and show some interest, sabbatical leaves for them to engage in attaining their administrative certification could be offered.

Fostering the talent from within permits the district to develop talented people who have a proven track record and a vested interest in their own district. It also provides multiple opportunities for individuals to grow and provide greater service to the district.

Recruiting Talented Principals in Other Districts. Districts are well advised to enlist the aide of respected administrators and others to help identify outstanding administrators in other districts who are looking for new opportunities. Not infrequently, outstanding individuals may be recruited by opportunities that offer the potential for professional growth, greater empowerment, and/or greater financial reward. These individuals can provide districts that court them the perspective of someone from the outside. A mix of administrators who have experience in other districts along with those who are "home grown" can provide a healthy balance between continuity and new thought. Districts that do not demonstrate they value the outstanding administrators they have foolishly do so at the peril of their students.

Developing Principals to Their Full Potential

Effective principals possess many of the skills suggested above. However, all principals can become much more proficient in their skills. NASE principals offer the following suggestions for developing principals' full potential.

Provide New Principals with Mentors. New principals face a myriad of unanticipated situations during their initial years. Often these situations are extremely perplexing and involve difficult and emotionally demanding engagement which they did not face as teachers. In many cases there are legal implications. In almost all cases, student welfare hangs in the balance. Good decision making is absolutely necessary. Many new principals do not have the experience to be confident in their decisions. Through mentor relationships, veteran principals may offer new principals valuable information which will make their decisions better and their entry into the profession less stressful. Veteran principals have a responsibility to assist their inexperienced colleagues through an informal mentor relationship. Districts should establish formal mentor relationships.

Provide Principals with Appropriate Training. Districts should provide all principals with training opportunities to enhance their skills and vision of schooling. Skills suggested above provide a training list to work from. Principals should have a good deal of discretion in the training they take. However, principals should receive systematic training in areas of weakness.

It is also important for principals to have multiple opportunities to increase the breadth and depth of their vision for what schools can and must become and the means to arrive at those ends. Such opportunities range from opportunities to attend local and national conventions as well as taking part in a wide variety of activities both in and out of the district.

Nurturing and Retaining Outstanding Principals

Principals are currently in short supply. Outstanding principals are even more difficult to find. Under these circumstances, it is imperative for those who value outstanding leadership to find ways to retain the best leaders they have. This is not an easy task, in part because some of the best will be upwardly mobile. However, there are conditions which may be created in a district which will help in retaining outstanding principals. These conditions, once created, have the wonderful triple effect of bringing outstanding principals to their full productivity, developing those with potential to become outstanding principals, and sending a strong positive message to others of quality who might consider becoming a principal in the district.

Conditions for retaining outstanding principals follow.

Provide Outstanding Principals with Opportunities to Grow

Outstanding principals crave professional growth; in most cases, these individuals will have difficulty sustaining peak performance without regular opportunities to grow. District leaders and board members who want to retain the best principals must nurture them accordingly. Providing a combination of unique training opportunities—such as leadership academies and other sustained intensive kinds of leadership opportunities—and opportunities to engage in challenging districtwide, statewide, regional or national work of consequence are recommended options. District leadership should balance the challenges they create for outstanding principals with the other demands in their professional lives.

Provide Outstanding Principals with Appropriate Support. The modern principalship is a difficult and challenging job, and no principal will function at peak capacity without appropriate support. District level administrators and trustees must recognize this fact if they want peak performance and to retain those capable of providing the best leadership. In real terms, this means providing, when necessary, resources such as assistant principals, deans, lunchroom aides, and teachers. It also means making sure district-level bureaucracy does not unduly impede building-level work. It also means appropriate support with difficult issues of student discipline, teacher supervision and other potentially legal issues.

Demonstrate that Outstanding Leadership Is Valued. Perhaps the most effective way to nurture and retain outstanding principals is to let them know they are valued. While this is conceptually simple, too often communities and those within districts behave in a manner inconsistent with this concept. Simply stated, parents, teachers, district-level administrators, and board members alike are well advised to let their best leaders know they are appreciated. And while there is no excuse for poor administration, generic administrator "bashing" is dangerous. Appropriate and differential compensation for outstanding principals is perhaps the best way to demonstrate the efforts of outstanding principals are valued.

Questions:
Twelve Important Questions About Creating Quality Schools

NASE principals were asked to respond to 12 key questions related to creating quality schools. Their responses provide additional insight into the ways that outstanding principals consider and address key issues. This information should assist those who are seeking outstanding principals identify individuals who think in ways similar to proven outstanding principals. The information will also assist those who aspire to becoming outstanding school leaders. Finally, the information is useful because the collective knowledge of these experts provides important information for anyone interested in creating a quality school.

1. What Are the Top Three Factors that Make a School Effective?

NASE principals collectively agree that high expectations and pride in the school internalized by the principal and communicated to staff, students, and parents is the most important factor. They believe the maxim that, "You have to believe before you can achieve." These principals strive to create in their schools a clear school vision of academic excellence with active staff involvement because they understand that achievement relates directly to high expectations. Additionally, NASE principals institute programs designed to meet the individual and collective needs of children and that are required for students to reach high expectations. NASE principals suggest that high expectations must be held to ensure that programs deliver quality education. They believe that part of high expectations relates to accountability of the adults—including themselves—have for raising student achievement. NASE principals make every effort to help their students, community, and staff develop a sense of pride that ensures excellence will prevail. They believe that success is the only option.

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Principals recognize excellence as a goal and not an end.

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Because there is never enough time in the day to accomplish everything, NASE principals work through a team effort. They strive to create a "we are all in this together" attitude and organization. In their view, a school management system that does not incorporate input from teachers, staff, parents, and students is ineffective; NASE principals involve all stakeholders in problem solving and decision making. They strive to provide all in their school community with a sense of ownership in the school and collective belief in its mission.

Finally, NASE principals recognize excellence as a goal and not an end. They understand that no matter how good an organization is, it can always become better. They suggest that when the principal stops trying to improve the school, he/she should make a plan to move from the school. They continually engage the staff in professional development, monitor instruction, coach and mentor teachers, and work to insure they are using effective, research-based teaching techniques. In viewing excellence as a goal, NASE principals recognize the close relationship between methodology and pedagogy, as well as the necessity of systematic evaluation of student progress to determine if goals are being reached.

2. How Does a Principal Influence Teachers to Have High Expectations for Low-Income, Low-Achieving Students?

NASE principals believe there is no doubt that the principal sets the tone, attitude, and expectations for a school. Because they understand that "do as I say" is not nearly as powerful as the example they set through their behavior, they constantly strive to make their thoughts and actions consistent. They understand that setting the example through action and deed is required for people to begin to really believe all students can learn. NASE principals communicate school vision—such as high expectations for all students—and articulate important beliefs so that

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all parties will have a clear understanding of values and expectations. Again, NASE principals believe that modeling the behaviors they expect from students and teachers translates into a powerful living philosophy which will be believed.

NASE principals understand that positive behavior and achievement need to be acknowledged and rewarded in order to be increased. They act as head "designated cheerleader" of the school, making it clear that neither socioeconomic status nor ethnicity are related to a child's ability. They view it is their job to share the school's successes with the staff and positively reward individual teachers in their successes with students.

NASE principals regularly communicate with parents, students and the community; they share their expectations, receive input, and celebrate student successes. NASE principals understand that nothing breeds success like genuine accomplishment. They do not allow socioeconomic status or ethnicity to become a roadblock to high student achievement.

3. What Are Procedures for Principals to Delegate Tasks to Others?

NASE principals realize that they cannot do it alone and do not want to do it alone. Consequently, NASE principals work and synergize with others. For example, they identify individuals who will take over the supervision of new programs after initial implementation, then turn those programs over to those individuals. NASE principals are quick to provide ongoing support. They observe and assess staff strengths and needs, prioritize the school's need areas, then match designated talents to meet those needs. They provide guidelines to individuals in accordance with their skill levels; they seek and reward individual creativity others use to meet identified goals and objectives. To ensure that individuals are working to a common end, they constantly articulate the relationship between goals and overall school mission.

Each year, NASE principals develop school effectiveness plans with their staffs. They ask committees to recommend specific action steps for tasks they will undertake; examples include the development and implementation of new programs, newsletters, homework policies, discipline policies, and technology plans. NASE principals engage teachers in school based management and empower them to get things done; they, likewise, hold site-based council members and other responsible parties accountable for completing assigned tasks.

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Principals understand that nothing breeds success like genuine accomplishment.

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4. What Are the Most Important Sources of Information and Ideas for School Reform?

The role of the school principal may seem lonely, but it does not have to be. NASE principals network with other principals and administrators who have a proven track record. They work together to share solutions to common problems. They often seek the advise of trusted colleagues prior to making difficult decisions. In short, NASE principals form a functional, professional network of like minded educators. This network also includes teachers, staff, parents, and influential community and business leaders who, together, possess a fantastic amount of knowledge and expertise which can be effectively channeled to support the schools mission.

Practice visitations to effective public and private schools for frequent "creative theft" of ideas and programs which result in high student achievement is one activity that NASE principals recommend. They understand that in order to learn, they cannot be afraid to ask. NASE principals do not waste time seeking advice from those who are mediocre; they seek advice from the best practitioners in the field.

NASE principals also use the services of professional organizations such as Regional Educational Laboratories, Centers for Professional Growth and Development, League of Cooperating Schools and VD/E/A (Kittering Foundation) Fellows Program, Association for the Supervision of Curriculum Development (ASCD) and national principal organizations.

NASE principals read, read and read. Reading materials such as books, journals, magazines, and reports are essential for growth addressing personally identified areas of weakness. Internet searches are also a highly productive in accessing necessary knowledge.

5. In What Areas is the Need for Staff Development the Greatest?

While there are many important areas for staff development, those that relate directly to student achievement and assessment are viewed as the most important by NASE principals. They suggest that due to the changing nature of education and the different skills and knowledge individuals bring to teaching, staff training needs to be differentiated based upon the school's mission and the individual strengths and weaknesses of staff members. Retraining of professional educators is best accomplished by other professionals. Perhaps the most effective model for sustained training of teachers is expert teachers teaching their colleagues over time. NASE principals believe in ongoing training, geared to specific needs, delivered over time.

6. What Are the Most Important Actions for Principals Assuming Leadership of an Ineffective School?

NASE principals believe if you do not know where you are going, you can end up anywhere. They believe in the power of developing a collective vision and philosophy that governs the direction of the school. They begin by reviewing the school profile. If one does not exist, they develop one. They analyze student performance data to identify major instructional needs. They identify problems requiring immediate attention and take action, even if it only buys some time to deal more effectively later. NASE principals conduct needs assessments involving participation from teachers, parents, and support staff; from this information they identify high priority needs and write their school plans to address these needs.

NASE principals conduct organizational assessments including historical perspectives on achievement, strengths and weaknesses of staff, curriculum needs, and unique needs of the students and families served. They make a general assessment in terms of climate, curriculum, and evaluation practices. They create and involve staff committees in the assessment process to develop a sense of ownership in initiating and executing change. They meet with community leaders. They study the population and get to know their constituency.

With the data and with participation of others, NASE principals develop and follow a strategic plan that includes their vision and goals and objectives to reach that vision. In effect, they develop a road map that identifies priority areas which include goals, objectives, activities, in service components, materials, and equipment. NASE principals are then able to prioritize their time and establish support systems in and out of school using community resources and expertise. They organize the physical plant to promote the school's mission and to meet instructional objectives. Finally, they assess progress in meeting their objectives and goals so that course corrections may be made as needed.

NASE principals articulate the vision to students, staff, parents and others.

7. What Activities Support and Assist Good Principal-Student Relationships?

NASE principals practice management by walking around. Although this may be an old phrase, it is still a very effective strategy for administrators. High visibility is created by principals through daily visits to classrooms. In addition, it was made very clear that the principal must be seen in the hallways, cafeterias, gymnasiums, at activities and community events talking with students on a regular basis. The principals did not minimize the power of interacting with students socially as well as academically and in disciplinary encounters. The principals felt it was essential that they teach as often as possible in all classes to let students see them in their most important role of all, master teacher and educational leader.

Rules for emotional and physical safety are paramount.

Specific examples provided by the principals explaining their interaction with students included the ideas that a principal must praise students constantly, support and maintain order and discipline, read and provide lots of positive reinforcement through programs, incentives, assemblies, love, hugs and saying "Yes, you can" to all students.

Finally, the principals felt that it was essential that they monitor each child's academic development and make suggestions for enhancing their individual progress. They reward and praise individual achievement whether it be grounded in achievement that is academic or behaviorally based. The principals are very sensitive to the needs of the students and their families. When necessary, they found ways to provide clothing, food, counseling and family support.

8. How Can Principals Find Time to Be Instructional Leaders?

All the principals stated that a principal does not have to do everything alone. In their schools they set priorities making instructional improvement number one. With this priority set, they began to improve organizational skills through effective time management. Examples of strategies they used included such things as keeping a log of daily schedules to assess time and accomplishments, perform administrivia after or before school, develop an effective chain of communication with staff that could be routinized through thoughtful delegation of duties, and empower through decision making. Finally, all agreed that it was necessary to develop the ability to predict questions and problems and attempt to answer and address these concerns before they occur.

9. How Can Teachers Be Freed from Classes for Staff Development?

The principals all discussed how creative scheduling is a key skill for all building administrators. Everyone maintained how essential it is to have a clear understanding of the schedule based upon what is right for children. The principals agreed that if the schedule is developed with the child's best interests in mind, then opportunities will be present to allow an effective principal to accomplish staff development during the school day. There are many ways

to accomplish this and the best way explained the principals was "to steal ideas from the most talented principals you can contact." All agreed that reinventing the wheel through trial and error is expensive, painful, and can hurt children through loss of learning time.

Some successful alternatives identified by the NASE group included splitting or combining classes to accomplish specific curricular goals, scheduling special activities (arts-to-schools, fire prevention programs) at training times, scheduling special Saturday training sessions, training during the school day for small groups, andilizing double sessions for students. Other successful strategies that were used and proposed by the group included arranging field trips for several classes to allow adult coverage using parents and school service assistants allowing the release of teachers for training. Some principals held sessions after school or on weekends and some paid staff a training stipend. The principals supported an increase in the school year to include scheduled training time. Many NASE principals plan staff development activities in the morning before class begins, plan block scheduling of specialists to free groups to meet regularly, arrange for assembly programs to free teachers to attend staff development sessions and develop a rotation schedule utilizing support staff to provide coverage. NASE principals emphatically stated that a number of days for staff development be built into the school calendar.

10. How Can Major Student Discipline Problems Be Improved?

NASE principals have always maintained that they set clear expectations for behavior that ensure a safe, orderly environment at their schools. Rules for emotional and physical safety are paramount and receive a high priority from the principals as they strive to be a strong, active model for teachers and students. The principals maintain that it is essential to develop a behavior management plan for the whole school including hallway traffic, lunchroom activities, playground activities, arrivals and dismissals. All their rules for behavior reflect high standards for discipline both in and out of the classroom.

The time has passed when a school can say that a great job is being done since 80 percent of the children are above average.

Rules alone are not enough. In addition, these principals assert that it is essential that a code of conduct be developed collectively with staff, students, and parents. They make certain that everyone understands and abides by its expectations. During the development of this strategy, the principals assess and maintain an ongoing discussion of current discipline concerns with staff. In all cases, the principals identify specific problem areas and prepare to be on the front line of enforcement along with the teachers.

The principals took an active role training staff in effective classroom management. All felt it is essential to take an active role in providing inservice, written information, and practice in models of discipline theory and implementation. Of course, all agreed that a schoolwide system of positive consequences was necessary and each always promotes and rewards excellent behavior.

11. What Are Procedures for Monitoring and Assessing Instruction?

NASE principals monitor student achievement and progress by regularly using a variety of instruments and assessment procedures. All agreed that data collected on student achievement must be desegregated. They asserted that the time has passed when a school can say that a great job is being done since 80 percent of the children are above average. The principals were adamant in relating that there can be no satisfaction for a 20 percent defective rate. Any business that operated on this premise would fail and the principals maintained that there can be no acceptable "write off" or "defect percentage" in regard to children. The principals maintain that the communities they represent cannot afford any of its members to be crippled with ignorance by being ill trained or not prepared.

All principals questioned insisted upon building or school district designated benchmarks and assessments that are required for all students. The principals used the data collected from these assessments to effect the future outcomes by using the information for constructive, timely feedback to staff and students. The principals saw testing and achievement as paramount for program development.

12. What Are Innovative Approaches to Programming the School Day?

NASE principals ensure that priority subjects are scheduled during prime times within the school day. They do not become trapped into using a schedule that follows past archaic thinking which ranks courses and adult convenience above student needs. Instead, today's basic skills take first priority within the variety of different schedules that can be used. Realizing that there are many and varied scheduling methods, the principals agreed that when we teach children and knowledge in isolated blocks of specific subject areas, we perpetuate a myth that education and learning are segmented activities. They assert that learning and the use of knowledge applied in isolation seems to exist in only one place in our society, the public school, not in the real world.

The principals agreed that large blocks of uninterrupted instructional time for reading and math need to be incorporated with blocks of time for other subject areas that reinforce reading in content areas. They schedule the school day realizing that there needs to be taken into account the reality that all areas being taught rely upon each other. Therefore, they recommend a common planning time for teachers in the same grade to help coordinate services as well as use team teaching strategies that utilize the combined talents of teachers.

Basic skills take first priority within the variety of different schedules that can be used.

The principals suggest that a principal seeking innovative ways to schedule need look no farther then the current literature or state, regional, and federal agencies. Creative scheduling has more to do with the will to complete the task rather than the knowledge to create a schedule. The successful practitioners interviewed created schedules that first and foremost met the needs of children, matched the school's mission and philosophy, and were supported by parents, the community, and educators.

Conclusion:
Leading America's Schools

Outstanding principals play a profound, pivotal role in creating schools where all students achieve at the highest levels. Outstanding principals are excellent managers of resources. Outstanding principals understand the kind of staff and curriculum necessary for all students to achieve their best. Outstanding principals are highly skilled in working with students, parents, teachers, other administrators, and community members to create conditions for success for all students. Most importantly, outstanding principals are leaders who set the moral tone for a building through their character and beliefs. They lead by example and focus their professional energies on the central conviction that human potential is unlimited: therefore, all children can learn-, no exceptions!

Outstanding principals are growing increasingly difficult to find and retain. It is imperative that school boards, central office administrators, parents, and others concerned with providing the best quality education possible find ways to do so. Children deserve no less.

Those who seek outstanding principals, must remember the personal qualities and convictions that are characteristic of the individuals whom they seek and that those qualities of character are more important than specific skills and knowledge required. But, they must seek those who possess or can develop these skills and knowledge.

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All children can learn, no exceptions!

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Those who seek outstanding principals must remember that the best place to look for prospects is among their outstanding teachers, and that an institutionalized, systematic method to nurture and challenge prospective candidates within the ranks will produce better candidate over time. They must also remember that to provide a healthy balance of administrators, outstanding candidates must be actively sought from outside the school district as well.

Perhaps most importantly, especially given the growing scarcity of prospective candidates, districts must make a concerted effort to retain the talented principals they have. This is not easy, but may be done in most cases by providing appropriate recognition, reward, growth opportunities,and support for these individuals. Failure by districts—boards, central administrators, teachers, parents and others—to heed this admonition will result in significant loss to the district of the human capital these talented individuals represent.

The NASE principals believe that for our children to reach their full potential and society to flourish, it is largely dependent upon the quality of school leadership. By following the recommendations presented herein, outstanding principals and those capable of becoming so may be identified, developed and retained.

Appendices

Identifying, developing, and retaining outstanding principals will be a major challenge for school systems throughout America in the coming years. This document has made the case that personal qualities and convictions possessed by principal candidates are the absolute bedrock for the selection of these future school leaders. Specific skills are necessary and varying styles of leadership imperative, but the consistent message throughout has been that effective building principals must possess and profess a moral responsibility to do what needs to be done so all children can succeed.

Everyone searches for and appreciates fast "turn arounds" of dismal situations. Quick fixes are always in demand and programs aplenty are available for most every problem imaginable in education today. The effective leaders of tomorrow can and will effectuate a quick beginning but that will not be all. Outstanding principals will inherently attune themselves to the quality school initiatives explained throughout this booklet and take the extra step so often missing in education today, lasting organizational change.

This document is not about quick fixes. This document is about lasting change. Still, the reader will note in the appendices listed that there are one and two year plans for change in schools that effective administrators can facilitate. It is not the intent of NASE to confuse issues here. Yes, talented individuals are needed to accomplish such feats and all the NASE principals are proof that the time lines can be met as evidenced by their documented past experiences. However, the timelines presented do not represent a cookbook approach to excellence. The timelines illustrate that specific benchmarks are attainable and must be identified, clarified, and met in a sequential, planned manner.

This document is about lasting change.

Quick success implementing the structural framework explained in the plans is hardly the end or only expectation of future building administrators. This document is more concerned about a cultural change in the school that accepts the mission and vision of excellence created through the initial structural changes that the one- and two-year plans illustrate.

Fast, systemic change requires charisma, effort, and the will to succeed. For two years a tremendous amount of energy and resources can be garnered and focused to begin the difficult task of rethinking the systems, routines, processes, rituals, and expectations of an existing school culture. This is just the beginning. When the initiatives attempted and implemented as explained in the plans become the standard ways for doing things in the school, educational excellence will be well on its way to being attained.

Appendix I:
10 Essential Elements

Two-Year Action Plan

INITIAL STEPS

Organize for Improvement

A school leadership team is essential to manage the planning and implementation of improvements in the school. Equally important in achieving success is involving other school staff members, district personnel and parents jointly in the school improvement effort. The principal takes the lead, but all staff are informed that an improvement effort is taking place. They are introduced to both the improvement concepts and the improvement process. The principal points out opportunities for staff involvement in planning and implementation of improvements at specific steps in the process and coordinates selection of the leadership team.

Study Effective Schooling Practices and Characteristics

Successful improvement efforts are based on effective schooling practices and characteristics associated with improvements in student performance. These "effective schooling practices" include elements of schooling associated with a clearly defined curriculum, focused classroom instruction and management; firm, consistent discipline-, close monitoring of student performance-, and strong instructional leadership.

Profile Student Performance

To make changes for improvement, it is necessary to know what is actually taking place in the school. Current levels of student performance must be identified to guide the planning for focused improvement. The leadership team collects data about student performance and these data are summarized into a school "profile," providing a broad picture of the performance of students across many or all curriculum areas.

Set a Goal for Improvement

Managed change is most effective when focused on specific priority goals. When school-wide efforts for improvement are tied to this goal, a commonality of purpose gives strength to improvement work. The entire school staff must be involved in the identification of a school-wide goal.

Check Current Instructional Practices

An analysis of current instructional practice is necessary to determine where practices can be changed to meet improvement goals. It is important to know the degree to which effective schooling practices are currently in place in the school. Student and parent perceptions of school practices are important. The purpose of this information is to get a picture of practice across content areas, grade levels and classrooms in the school.

Develop a Plan for Improvement

Once the goal is established and current levels of practice identified, the next step is to select ways to change practice to meet the improvement goal. Instructional methods and techniques are selected which can contribute to the improvement of student performance in the goal area.

Prepare for Implementation

There must be a plan for putting selected effective schooling practices into operation in the school. Responsibilities are assigned, materials are developed, necessary resources are identified and time lines are established for implementation of practices related to the goal area.

Implement the Plan

According to the plan, the new practices are implemented in the school. The leadership team manages the implementation, working with all staff members.

Monitor Implementation

To assure progress toward planned improvements, completion of activities specified by the plan must be monitored for adherence to the overall prescription for improvement. In addition, as the school progresses toward full implementation, student performance is monitored to evaluate impact of the improvements. Based on monitoring, adjustments are made as needed to improve effectiveness.

Evaluate Progress and Renew Efforts

At the end of the first cycle of improvement (usually the specified target date for full implementation), the entire staff reviews improvement results. They identify strengths and weaknesses of the plan and its implementation and they recommend ways to improve the school-wide approach. The staff and leadership team discuss the improvement effort and decide whether the school should continue to work in the original goal area or move on to a new goal.

YEAR ONE

MONTH 1

Assess Strengths and Needs

Elicit assistance of staff and parents to collect and collate hardcore data including:

- History of students achievement levels
- Current test results
- Attendance and suspension patterns
- Instructional materials
- Homework procedures policies and current practices
- Condition of the physical plant including safety and appearance
- Discipline and behavior
- Existing rules and standards
- Communication with staff, students and parents
- Quality and quantity of parent and student involvement with the school.
- Student and staff population

Analyze the Curriculum and Instruction

High expectations are publicized from the beginning. Excuses (for failure) are systematically buried with the other trash.

- State and local mandates
- Existing program design
- Implementation, monitoring and evaluation systems
- Staff development
- Staff evaluation

Internalize Effective School Practices

The stage is set for high expectations beginning with the principal. An staff know what the norm should he measured by.

- Study effective schools research
- Observe an effective school(s) personally
- Network with other successful principals, teachers and parents
- Identify teachers and practices that currently demonstrate effective practices and reward publicly-in staff meetings, before parent groups and in the community.

MONTH 2

Establishing a philosophy is essential. Communicate a vision of academic success for all students to staff, students, and parents.

Form a Core Leadership Team

The leadership team should reflect race, gender, job classification and grade levels of the school Including.

- Administration
- Staff
- Parents
- Union representative

Develop a School Profile Based on Hard Core Data

- Profile of students' achievement-collectively and individually
- Profile of staff
- Profile of the community
- Description of school's strengths and weaknesses

Develop a Mission Statement

Based on the school profile develop the mission statement into an action plan for the year. Plans should be prepared for each area including:

- Curriculum
- Performance objectives
- Staff development
- Evaluation process
- Support
- Design and organize appropriate handbooks

It may be necessary for the principal to dictate some major changes quickly, i.e., facility repair and student discipline. These immediate successes can be used as a springboard for future, more abstract changes.

MONTH 3

Openly Publicize Good News, Bad News, and Plans for Improvement

- Orient all teachers and staff
- Communicate clear expectations
- Develop lesson and unit plans to meet goals
- Implement the support plan

Begin Ongoing Staff Development and Monitor Progress Regularly

Be in every classroom everyday. Ask teachers three simple questions: What are you doing? How does it relate to what you did yesterday? How does it relate to what you will do tomorrow?

Begin the Evaluation and Assessment Process

MONTHS 4-5

Review and Monitor Student Achievement

- Do this by school, grade, class and individual

MONTHS 6-7

- Continue implementation of plans
- Continue staff development
- Publicly recognize successes
- Conduct frequent monitoring and committee meetings

MONTH 8

- Refine long range plans and make appropriate changes

MONTH 9

- Plan appropriate standardized testing procedures
- Monitor progress

MONTHS 10-11

- Monitor implementation of testing
- Monitor end of year activities
- Develop a new complete school profile

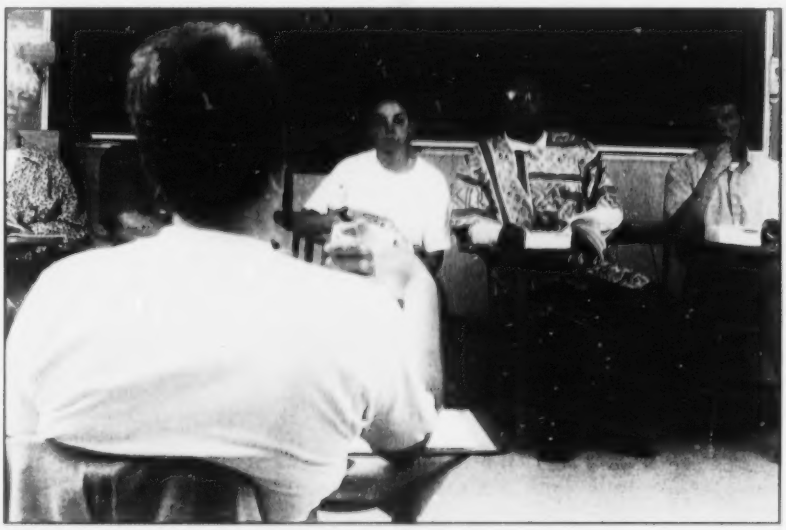
MONTH 12

- Reassess programs and priorities
- Adjust school plan for next year
- Involve staff in professional development programs based on school profile and assessment of needs

YEAR TWO

Begin Again, Building on Previous Successes and Addressing Remaining Needs

- Restate mission of school frequently
- Re-emphasize high expectations of performance by staff and students
- Involve staff and parents in problem solving and decision making
- Publicize results of performance and shoot toward new goals
- Reward success often
- Monitor progress and performance of all areas regularly
- Study and internalize effective schools research
- Network with other successful schools



Appendix II:
Two-Year Action Plan To Reach International Standards

We are about to enter an exciting and dynamic new era in our public school process. The coming changes will be challenging. Making them happen will require hard work, focused dedication to educational excellence with practical applications and a strong commitment to re-establishing America as a world leader in education and learning.

This "Blueprint for Change" has been developed by some of the very best American and international educators. They are practitioners, not just theorists. It details what is needed if we ever hope to have our children achieve international academic standards.

Implementing strategies to raise our children's academic achievement to international standards will not be an accident. The following strategies for implementation will guarantee students the skills and abilities needed to succeed in the 21st century and also foster a positive attitude toward lifelong learning.

We have the resources. We must now demonstrate that we also have the will, because failure for our children is simply not an option.

YEAR ONE: A New Beginning

STEP 1. COMMUNITY AWARENESS (3-6 MONTHS)

Successful educators, astute parents and informed business people know our education system is facing a state of emergency. Although the American public seems to be voicing agreement, few communities will admit that there is anything wrong with their school.

It is absolutely imperative that local schools plan a detailed awareness campaign to inform community members of the need for change and the eventual cost of not changing.

Specific international statistics, business needs and governmental information must be disseminated. We suggest that students be a primary audience and be taught to ask, "Why am I learning this?"

Designate one individual or department to gather information regarding effective schools and international techniques.

Compile relevant school profile data and make evaluative comparisons for students within the district.

List strengths and weaknesses and candidly report.

Prepare five distinct reports aimed at five audiences (educators, business, parents, community, students) that detail where you are and where you need to be.

Present reports to all groups and recruit resources.

With this select group, plan an in-depth awareness campaign for the community at large.

Publicize results of the awareness campaign and decide whether to continue.

STEP 2. COMMUNITY CONSENSUS ON NEW SCHOOL PURPOSE AND GOALS (3-6 MONTHS)

"The American public and education community do not know the purpose of elementary and secondary education anymore. When we talk about what we are going to teach and assess in our schools, it is based upon our institutional heritage and what we were taught. It is not based upon a systematic analysis of what children are going to use in their adult years. A detailed plan of what skills and knowledge students need is necessary."— Daggett, USA

Create a group of influential community members composed of the five original target groups to outline specifically the purpose of your school.

Initiate any and all strategies necessary to compile this information for a community consensus.

Publicize your community's next steps.

STEP 3. COMMUNITY CONSENSUS ON NEEDED ACADEMIC SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE (4 MONTHS)

Once a systematic analysis has led to the development of school purpose and goals, consensus must next be reached on what skills and knowledge students must have to reach the stated goals (detailed earlier in this document; see pages 1-36).

The institutional setting that currently governs our delivery of instruction cannot be allowed to prevent us from reaching high levels of education.

Specifically identify the knowledge, skills and attitudes that need to be learned to match the goals of the school. This must be done for both school staff and students.

Identify how staff will acquire new skills, or how new instruction will be made available to students, possibly using distance learning technologies.

Disregard all institutional restraints when making your plans.

Aim to exceed international standards at all levels.

STEP 4. NEGOTIABLES & NON-NEGOTIABLES (1 MONTH)

"In American education, it is okay to reform schools as long as you do not affect an adult role. This relegates us to no real change.

School systems need to confront all institutional roles and decide which are negotiable and which are not. If the school year needs lengthening, will the public agree to fund the change or will educators agree to work for less?

Does the sanctity of subject-centered course work override the identified need for an interdisciplinary approach to education if it means the elimination of administrators and teachers?

Communities need to confront each obstacle and agree on which are negotiable and which are not, before real change can be implemented" — Daggett, USA

Courageously confront every obstacle that impedes essential skill attainments and determine whether or not the institutional structure will negotiate change.

Get specific, guaranteed commitments from government, labor, business and management for each institutional change negotiated.

Get specific, signed policy statements from any party that refuses to negotiate on an item that is deemed essential.

Create a mechanism that allows for immediate change and flexibility should new areas or situations occur that are open for negotiation.

STEP 5. DEVELOP A PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION (2 MONTHS)

The four steps previously listed must be completed before this step can be attempted. There is no mystery to writing a plan. Those interested in change will do so swiftly.

Use successful practices that are common to the area for planning strategies.

Determine costs and secure committed funding and resources.

Continually report to all areas of the community and publicize final plan with time lines and accountability checks in place.

YEAR TWO: Implementation

Implementing your completed plan will be the easiest step in the process for real change. Curricula need to be rewritten, new assessment techniques developed and teachers need to be retrained. The work will be difficult, but we have the resources available to make these changes happen rather quickly. We submit that past implementation plans and schemes failed to work because little effort has been put into achieving the first four steps described in this process.

Follow the plan.

Begin second school year implementing changes that raise achievement to international standards.

Monitor the plan and revise when necessary.

Along the way, celebrate successes with your community.

Appendix III:
National Association for Schools of Excellence (NASE)

Position Statement

The National Association For Schools of Excellence (NASE) was incorporated in 1999 with 22 principals as charter members. The group initially was brought together by AMA Head Start and The Toni Peters Group. The first conference was held in July, 1988, at Gearhart, Oregon and the second meeting November, 1988, at Rippling River, Oregon. The third meeting was conducted during November, 1989. All three meeting were made possible by the generous support of the Oregon Business Community as well as the ongoing support of Governor Neil Goldschmidt and Senator Mark 0. Hatfield.

The purpose of this organization of nationally recognized educators who are successfully educating low income children is to influence national policy that will foster equity and excellence in the education of all children. This will be accomplished by advocacy and charting a course for positive change in the education of America's undereducated children. Specifically, NASE supports the following steps toward meaningful educational reform:

- Establishment of National Standards for Educational Performance. These standards should lie identified with major input from successful practitioners. These standards should reflect levels equal to or above the highest international student performance. This would necessitate the immediate and on going assessment of student performance in other countries and a dynamic process of continually upgrading this information.
- Implementation of genuine accountability for the successful education of all children. Student performance and progress toward national goals must be monitored regularly at the local, state and national levels for the purpose of improving schools which are not progressing adequately and rewarding schools which are successfully educating all children.
- Once National Standards for student performance have been established and a system of genuine accountability implemented, schools should be afforded the flexibility to utilize existing funding sources to best reach these goals, addressing local needs and fostering creativity and innovation.
- Establishment of a national policy that would reward innovation and academically successful schools, social and tangible rewards that reflect our nation's values. If an excellent and equitable education for all children is truly a national priority, commensurate rewards should be in place to promote successful practices and dedicated, innovative educators.
- Assurance that children enter the public school system ready to learn through the provision of a comprehensive, quality preschool-daycare program for all children at risk. Preparing children prior to kindergarten or first grade will optimize their ability to access the education system which awaits them.
- Incorporation of curriculum at the elementary and secondary levels which teaches student-, a sense of civic consciousness, preparing students to participate responsibly and humanely in a democratic society.
- Preparation of students to enter the workforce successfully emphasizing skills and information which allow students to access a wide variety of college and vocational opportunities.
- NASE will form business partnerships and alliances and expand the membership by including other educators who have beat the odds and performed beyond expectations in creating success for all students. We believe and have demonstrated, that all children can learn. The time for reform is now and we encourage you to include successful practitioners such as ourselves in the dialogue and implementation of national education reform.
- National Association for Schools of Excellence (1989). Partners for Success p. 58.